

Presentation to the Washington Utilities Coordinating Council
Spokane, WA
December 12, 2002

Good morning (afternoon). My name is Haywood Johnson. Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today. I am here representing the Washington Citizens Committee on Pipeline Safety. I was recently appointed to this Committee by the Governor's Office and look forward to working with this group on issues related to pipeline safety.

(Some short personal background in addition to being on the Citizens Committee..... previous work history, city council in Zillah, etc.)

For any of you who don't know, the Citizens Committee was created by the State Legislature in 2000 in response to recommendations made by the Governor's Fuel Accident Prevention and Response Team. That taskforce was of course convened following the tragic petroleum pipeline failure and explosion in Bellingham that claimed the lives of three young people. The taskforce suggested that a Committee made up of local government representatives and other citizens could provide useful input to regulatory agencies charged with overseeing the pipeline companies in our state. Our 13-member committee meets regularly to discuss issues and learn about best practices focused at keeping the pipelines, and thus the public, safe.

When the Washington State Legislature adopted the Washington State Pipeline Safety Act in 2000, it identified one-call systems as a key ingredient to preventing damage to underground utilities, including pipelines. Your group is the key player in our state's one-call system and your many years of work to enhance safety and integrity of underground utilities is an admirable accomplishment. Also admirable is the progress that your organization has made over the last several years to coordinate the one-call activities within Washington. I want to congratulate you on the successes you've achieved as you've moved from nearly a dozen one-call organizations just a few years ago, to three groups today. In addition, the work that was done to make a single statewide toll-free number available for excavation notification deserves special mention as well.

Making notification as simple and as reliable as possible for the public was an important step towards improving damage prevention for underground facilities. Thank you for those accomplishments.

As many of you know, the work to inform the public and professionals about the need to protect underground facilities is an on-going education effort. Beside you, other groups are hard at work developing improved programs and messages targeted at getting everyone to work together for damage prevention. In 1999, the U. S. Department of Transportation's Office of Pipeline Safety (OPS), commissioned a report that was entitled "*Common Ground - Study of One-Call Systems and Damage Prevention Best Practices*". In 2000, the WUCC and the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission collaborated on a number of workshops to discuss best management practices identified in the *Common Ground* report. The workshops provided stakeholders and interested parties an opportunity to comment on the best practices. .

As an outcome of the workshops, stakeholders, including WUCC members, consulted expressed strong support for over half of the 23 best practices identified by the *Common Ground* study. The Citizens Committee recommends that the WUCC go back to this study and work to determine which, if any, of the best practices have been implemented and which still need to be worked on. Continuing improvement to our state's damage prevention system is what this organization all about. Working toward identified best practices can only help to move you along that continuum of improvement.

Thank you for your time today.